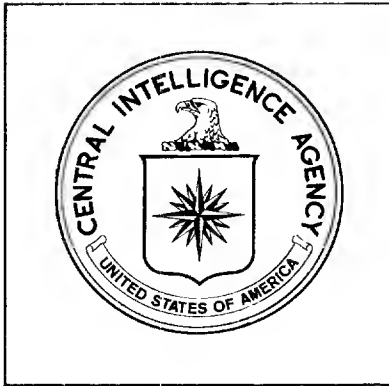


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**Middle East
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Israel

Allon Criticized by Conservatives

The Israeli press has reported that negotiating positions discussed by Foreign Minister Allon during his recent visits to Washington were criticized by conservatives at last Sunday's cabinet meeting. Assuming the report is accurate, the criticism reflects the strong opposition Prime Minister Rabin is sure to encounter from the powerful conservative bloc to any Israeli-Egyptian agreement in the Sinai that does not include explicit political concessions by Cairo.

According to an Israeli commentator with good contacts in conservative political circles, Defense Minister Peres argued that the proposals went beyond the framework established by the cabinet, namely that Israel is prepared for a partial withdrawal in the Sinai only in return for a political settlement with Egypt. Peres said the government has never decided on such proposals as an Israeli withdrawal of 30 to 50 kilometers in the Sinai or the participation of US units in a UN force to supervise the arrangement.

According to the press account, similar criticism of Allon, and thereby indirectly of Prime Minister Rabin, came from other conservative ministers, including Minister without Portfolio Galili, who is a powerful figure in Rabin's Labor Party. It apparently specifically included objections to any Israeli withdrawal from the Gidi and Mitla passes. Other ministers were said to have defended Allon, arguing that if he had not advanced concrete proposals, Secretary Kissinger would have had no basis for agreeing to return to the Middle East and Israel no reason to have invited him.

Rabin, in responding to the conservatives' questions, reportedly stressed the cordial welcome given Allon by President Ford and the President's readiness to extend Israel long-range US assistance. Allon was in London at the time and thus did not attend the cabinet session. He is scheduled to present a full report to the entire cabinet at its regularly scheduled session next Sunday.

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Mauritania

Resumption of French-Mauritania Dialogue

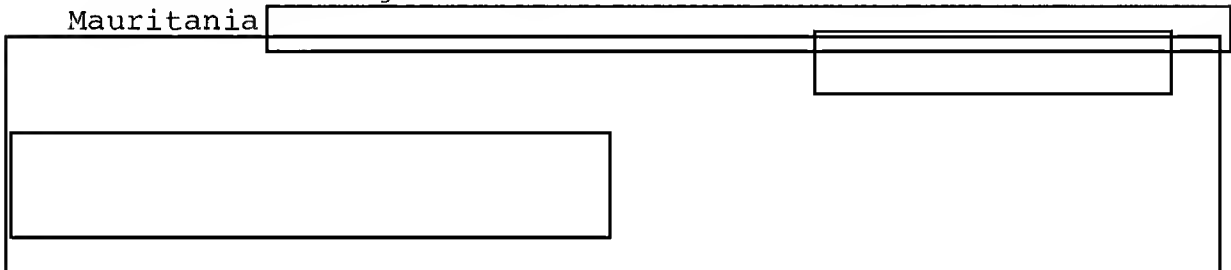
Recent visits to Nouakchott by three high-level French delegations have reopened Franco-Mauritanian dialogue. Although the French embassy characterized the visits as "routine," "private" or "courtesy" stops, the Mauritaniens exhibited considerable interest in each one.

The visit by France's Minister of Cooperation Abelin on January 12 included meetings with President Ould Daddah and several cabinet ministers. This visit was preceded by those of Prime Minister Chirac on December 30 and a delegation of French aid experts in mid-December.



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The resumption of official talks suggests that France is willing to conduct business as usual with Mauritania

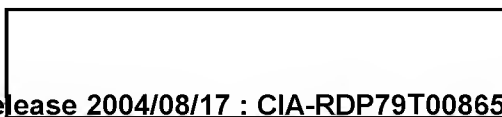


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India-Maldives*Mrs. Gandhi's Visit*

Indian Prime Minister Gandhi last week concluded a successful three-day visit to the tiny Republic of Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The trip strengthened already improving economic and political ties and yielded modest gains for both sides.

Mrs. Gandhi's decision to accept the invitation at a time when she faces serious domestic problems underscores her concern over Britain's proposed withdrawal from its airbase on Gan Island--located several hundred miles southwest of India in the Maldives' southernmost atoll--and the ultimate disposition of the facility. Mrs. Gandhi knows the Male government might find it difficult to refuse a generous offer from one of the great powers for long-term privileges on Gan; the facility now generates roughly 20 percent of the Maldives' foreign exchange earnings. India has long been on record against any foreign military presence in the Indian Ocean.

Although the Malivians made no firm commitment, Indian foreign ministry officials seem confident that no other outside power will get the Gan base should the British decide to withdraw. The Indians also were clearly pleased with what they regard as strong Maldivian support in the final communique for New Delhi's nuclear and Indian Ocean Peace Zone policies.

The visit resulted in a modest expansion of India's small aid program to the Maldives. New aid will include financing a fish cannery, help with school construction, a few additional medical school scholarships for Maldivians, and an Indian commitment to study the possibility of opening direct air links with India.

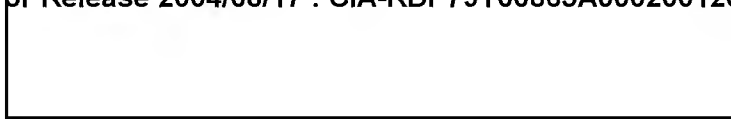
The Maldivians realize their country is limited by size, resources, and location, but see India as one means of achieving their major international goal

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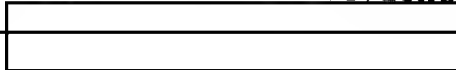
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of expanding regional relationships beyond Sri Lanka, Male's major trading partner. The narrowly based Maldivian economy suffered serious dislocations during a recent period of severely strained relations with Colombo, and Male has sought to end permanently what it views as Ceylonese economic domination.

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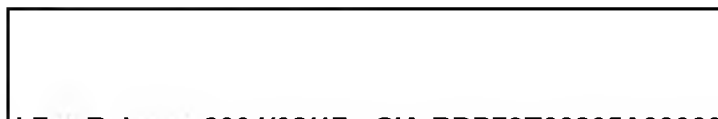


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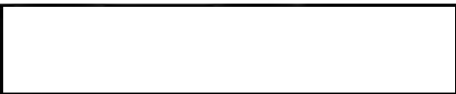


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